

Thoughts on Nietzsche

Selected by Béla Egyed

In later years I have denied myself the very great pleasure of reading the works of Nietzsche, with the deliberate object of not being hampered in working out the impressions received in psycho-analysis by any sort of anticipatory ideas. I have had therefore to be prepared - and I am so, gladly - to forgo all claims to priority in the many instances in which laborious psychoanalytic investigation can merely confirm the truths which the philosopher recognized by intuition.

S. Freud: "On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement" (1914)

Naturally, it is impossible to realize the collective unconscious without being entirely dismembered or devoured, unless you have help...That is what happened to Nietzsche. In his solitude he tapped the unconscious and was instantly filled with the inflation of Zarathustra: he became Zarathustra...One is never sure whether Zarathustra is speaking, or Nietzsche - or is it his anima? This is not true, that is not true, and yet everything is true...That comes from the fact that Nietzsche was alone, with nobody to understand his experiences...I remember when *Zarathustra* came out, and I know what people said...They all thought that *Zarathustra* was the work of a madmen...Naturally, he was undermining their castles in Spain, their most cherished ideals, so to them he was not just a lunatic, but also a dangerous one. All the educated people in Basel were horrified at the spectacle, shocked out of their wits in every respect...And at the same time they were frightened because they felt an amazing amount of truth in what he said.

C. Jung: Lectures on Zarathustra (26 October 1938)

Nietzsche would define man as an animal that can make and keep promises. He sees the real nobility of man in his capacity for promising something, answering for himself and undertaking a responsibility - since man, with the mastery of himself which this capacity implies, necessarily acquires in addition a mastery over external circumstances and other creatures, whose will is not so lasting...

Nietzsche proposes the following brilliant hypothesis: The bad conscience is a deep-seated morbid condition that declares itself in man under the stress of the most radical change he has ever experienced - when he found himself imprisoned in perpetuity within a society which was inviolable...Creatures adapted to a roving life of war and adventure suddenly saw all their instincts classed as worthless, nay, as forbidden. An

immense despondency, dejection without parallel, then took possession of them. And all these instincts that were not allowed an outward vent, turned inwards on the man himself...and thus the bad conscience originated.

G. Brandes: “An Essay on Aristocratic Radicalism” (1887)

For a long time Nietzsche had been a seeker. It is with Zarathustra that he made himself a priest; and the discourses he pronounces from the height of his mountain bears witness to the assurance he had acquired by this metamorphosis. The experiences of the priest (in its capacity as seer!) are more intense than those of the seeker. It is on that account that he is more convinced of himself; that he has the sentiment of being an envoy of the sun, of the moon and the stars. And, he listens only in order to understand their language, as much as his duty – in his view – demands.

O. Weininger: “Seekers and Priests” (1900-03)

And so, Nietzsche became a battle ground of conflicting and contentious drives, out of whose painful abundance alone came development. Through this turmoil – the will to mastery and the need to serve, the rape of one by the other – we see in Nietzsche a replay of the origins of all culture and the struggle from which a superior culture was to evolve as the very summit of creation. Never a person at peace with himself, or one who takes pleasure in himself, Nietzsche is a fighter who invites his own defeat.

Lou Andreas Salomé, Nietzsche (1894)

Nietzsche’s great achievement, the far-reaching consequences of which will be seen by future generations only, was in declaring that tragedy is a product of the intoxication and joy of life, that it does not calm us or liberate us from our will to live, but rather arouses the same to new ferment, despite the opinions of Schopenhauer and all the quietists of the art-world. The view which grasps and works on the principle of this paradox, I call the *philosophy of the tragic*. I mean a view of the suffering in life which, despite all appearances, does not teach us to deny life and the will to live, but rather teaches us to affirm both...*in spite of everything*.

F. X. Šalda: “Art and Religion” (1914)

The history of philosophy had never yet seen an atheist like Nietzsche. Nietzsche is the first thinker who - not negates God – but, in the really proper theological use of the word: “refutes” him. More precisely: he curses him...“If God existed, how could I bear not to be him?” Never yet had a philosopher held his own in this way, eye to eye, against the living God, so to speak...The defiant Self looks with furious hatred upon divine freedom liberated from all defiance, a freedom which forces him into a refutation

because he must take it for an absence of limits: for how else could he bear not to be God? It is not God's being, but God's freedom that leads him to protect himself in this way...

F. Rosenzweig: The Star of Redemption (1920)

Nietzsche ignored the fact that love in the Christian sense is always primarily directed at man's ideal spiritual self, at man as member of the kingdom of God. Therefore he equated the Christian idea of love with a completely different idea which has quite another historical and psychological origin: *the idea and movement of universal love of man*, "humanitarianism," "love of mankind," or more plastically: "love toward every member of the human race." We agree with Nietzsche that *ressentiment* was the real root of this idea.

M. Scheler: "Ressentiment" (1928)

But Nietzsche wanted more [than Tolstoy]; he wanted, he was compelled, to *love* all of this hateful reality, for it was in him and he could not hide himself from it. It was not he who invented *amor fati*, any more than it was he who invented his entire philosophy, to which he was brought by the iron will of this *fatum*. That is why one who would refute Nietzsche's philosophy must first refute the life from which he drew it.

L. Shestov: "The Good in the Teaching of Tolstoy and Nietzsche: Philosophy and Preaching" (1900)

But Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche no longer take into account the needs of "the good and the just" (the Mills and the Kants). They have understood that man's future, if man really has a future, rests not on those who now rejoice in the belief that they already possess both goodness and justice, but on those who know neither sleep, rest, nor joy and who continue to struggle and search. Abandoning their old ideals, they go to meet new reality, however terrible and disgusting it may be.

L. Shestov: "Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche: The Philosophy of Tragedy" (1903)

It is possible to select quotations from Nietzsche's writings that uncompromisingly contradict my interpretation of him, but it is sufficient that this interpretation be coherently argued from the texts and that its objective importance justifies the assumption that it constitutes the original core of Nietzsche's doctrines, which are so essential to the intellectual climate...

Nietzsche's thinking is shaped by historical notions. His concepts of value, which indicate by their ebb and flow the cosmic process born by man, are of specifically histo-

rical nature...Nietzsche's thinking is marked by extraordinary combinations, which are profound in their concrete applications rather than in their logical abstractions.

G. Simmel: Schopenhauer and Nietzsche (1907)

A quite general and abstract class-determination of religious ethics might be deduced from the theory of "resentment," known since Friedrich Nietzsche's brilliant essay and since then spiritedly treated by psychologists. As is known, this theory regards the moral glorification of mercy and brotherliness as a "slave revolt in morals" among those who are disadvantaged, either in their natural endowments or in their opportunities as determined by life-fate. The ethics of "duty" is thus considered a product of "repressed" sentiments for vengeance on the part of "economic" men who "displace" their sentiments because they are powerless, and condemned to work and to money-making.

M. Weber: "The Economic Ethic of the World Religions" (1913)

The fact that there *is* no such thing as being German, that being German is to *become* – remains Nietzsche's most concise formulation far all that is to be German. But, at the same time, this becoming is the reason for Nietzsche's asking – time and time again – "What are the essential traits of being German?" and it is the reason why, among Germans the question: "What is being German?" is being continually asked. To pose this question of the so called "Beyond" (*Jenseits*) ceaselessly is almost a distinctive German trait. And, this question will continue to be posed because the Becoming German - consisting of a multitude of possible evolutions – rests, precisely, on "a being" that is as indefinable by logic as it is by metaphysics..."Who knows if man as a whole is not more than a simple effort toward a higher goal" [says Nietzsche]. There is here already, in embryonic form, an anticipation of Zarathustra's teaching of the Overman: "All beings up to now have created something that has surpassed them...man is something that has to be overcome – What have you done to overcome him?" And, if for Nietzsche Zarathustra's Overman does not manifest itself as a future reality - as a prediction of something to come – but as an elevating, yet in itself unattainable guiding illusion; ...[then it would be] as unreachable as the foot of a rainbow.

The tragedy of Nietzsche; the grandiose magic - but which, deep down, is hopeless – of his Zarathustra, was the irreducible opposition, in a deadly equilibrium, of two conflicting forces in his nature: the individualist thirst for knowledge – to analyze like Socrates; and the will to mystery which constructs by means of prophecy, and desperately aspires to community.

E. Bertram: Nietzsche: An Attempt at Mythology (1918)

There was once a German spirit, a German courage, a German manhood that did not express themselves in the uproar of the herd or in mass enthusiasm. The last

great vehicle of that spirit was Nietzsche, who, amid the business boom and sheep like conformism that characterized the beginnings of the German Empire, became an anti-patriot and anti-German....Only a few suspect how deeply the German mind had degenerated long before the war. If we wish once again to have minds and men capable of securing our future, we must not begin at the tail end, with political methods and forms of government, but at the beginning, with the building of the personality.

H. Hesse: "A Word to German Youth". (1919)

That life and science are not possible without imaginary or false conceptions was also recognized by Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche observed early that such invented and therefore erroneous conceptions are unconsciously employed by men to the advantage of life and science; he was here following Schopenhauer and probably Richard Wagner and his doctrine of "hallucination".

H. Vaihinger: "Nietzsche and his Doctrine of Conscious Illusion". (1924)

From the Christian teaching, that all men are equal before God, follows necessarily the demand for political equality in modern democratic states. For Nietzsche, this teaching contains a disorganizing principle: not only does it abolish natural differences, it also annihilates all traditions. The democratic ideal rests on the acceptance of the claim that all persons are the same, and on the belief in the final triumph of truth, love and righteousness. But, such a belief is life destroying, it hinders the establishment of a "hierarchy of forces" in which the commanders command and the followers follow. (Will to Power)...

Germany can exist world-historically only under the form of greatness. Its only choice is to be the anti-Roman power of Europe, or not to be [at all]. If it accommodates itself to the civilization of the West it throws itself under Rome, if it forgets its German origins it falls down to the East. The creator of Europe, that is more than a Roman colony, can only be a Nordic Germany, the Germany of Nietzsche and Hoelderlin. Nietzsche does not belong next to Bismark; he belongs in the age of great wars. The German state of the future will not be a continuation of what Bismarck created; rather it will be made out of the spirit of Nietzsche and from the spirit of great wars.

A. Baeumler: Nietzsche: The Philosopher and Politician (1930)

Nietzsche is perhaps best known as the prophet of great wars and power politics and as an opponent of political liberalism and democracy. That is the idol of the "tough Nietzscheans" and the whipping boy of many a critics. The "tender Nietzscheans," on the other hand, insist – quite rightly – that Nietzsche scorned totalitarianism, denounced the State as "The New Idol", and was himself a kindly and charitable person; but some of them infer falsely that he must therefore have been a liberal and a democrat, or

a socialist. We have tried to show that Nietzsche opposed both the idolatry of the State and political liberalism because he was basically “*antipolitical*” and, moreover, loathed the very idea of belonging to any “party” whatever...

Nietzsche was not primarily a moral philosopher at all, but supremely interested in the sphere of “Absolute Spirit”: he was concerned, above all, with the artist, the philosopher, and the man who achieves self-perfection – the last having taken the place of the saint. Particular actions seemed much less important to Nietzsche than the state of being of the whole man – and those who achieve self-perfection and affirm their own being all eternity, backward and forward, have no thought of the morrow.

W. Kaufmann: Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist (1950)

... [Nietzsche] considered the whole “worker problem” to be a purely ideological issue: the ruling class ideologues were to decide the course of conduct that the workers should follow. Nietzsche quite overlooked the fact that the question had objective economic foundations. The sole deciding factor, for him, was how the “masters” stood on the question; they could achieve anything if they were determined enough. (Here Nietzsche was a direct forerunner of the Hitlerian view.)...

...many of Nietzsche’s interpreters, especially in recent times, have been eager to water down all his tendencies toward the revival of barbarity, glorification of the white terror and moral sanction of cruelty and bestiality – eager indeed to eliminate them from his work. Often they give one the impression that the “blond beast” is only a harmless metaphor within a delicate cultural critique. To counter such distortions we must always refer back to Nietzsche who, in all such matters, - and in this he was a sincere thinker, no hypocrite or sneak – wrote with a downright cynical candor...

In challenging cultural decline and in trying to pioneer a future revival he was no doubt sincere in his own mind, albeit personally sincere from an extremely reactionary class standpoint.

G. Lukacs: “Nietzsche as Founder of Irrationalism” (1952)

Part of the significance of Nietzsche’s political philosophy lies in the fact that it is an implicit critique of Marxism...One may summarize the relationship of Marxism to Nietzsche’s political philosophy as follows: the Marxist realm of freedom which is to be secured by the revolution is for Nietzsche the realm of the last man, the utter degradation of man. Nietzsche thought more philosophically, more profoundly, than Marx did about what was to follow the revolution...

Fascism may have abused the words of Nietzsche, but his words are singularly easy to abuse...A man who counsels men to live dangerously must expect to have dangerous men like Mussolini heed his counsel...

W. J. Dannhauser: “Friedrich Nietzsche” (1963)

As far as I can see, there are two mistakes which warp Nietzsche's thinking and lead to his downfall. The first one is a complete, we must assume: a deliberate misperception of the power relationship between instinct and intellect on earth, just as though the latter were the dangerously dominating elements, and it was high time to save instinct from its threat. If one considers how completely will, urge and interest dominate and hold down intellect, reason and the sense of justice in the great majority of people, the opinion becomes absurd that intellect must be overcome by instinct...The second one of Nietzsche's errors is the utterly false relationship he establishes between life and morals when he treats them as opposites. The truth is that they belong together. Ethics supports life, and a man with good morals is an upright citizen of life, - perhaps a little boring, but extremely useful. The real opposites are ethics and *aesthetics*. Not morality, but beauty is linked to death, as many poets have said and sung, - and Nietzsche should not know it?

T. Mann: "The Philosophy of Nietzsche in the Light of Our Experience" (1947)

To philosophize with Nietzsche means to be constantly taking issue with him. In the fire of his thought, one's own existence can become purified to the point of awareness of a genuine self-being when tested by the boundless honesty and danger of Nietzsche's critical questioning. Such self-being can only be experienced as something that passes, not into existence, and not into objectivity or subjectivity of world being, but rather into transcendence. Nietzsche does not lead one to this at once - he tries rather to free one from it. But the earnestness of the total surrender that Nietzsche achieves is - in spite of his rejection of transcendence - like an unintended simile and archetype that expresses the profound experience of being consumed through transcendence.

K. Jaspers: Nietzsche: An Introduction to his Philosophical Activity (1935)

The Platonism of Nietzsche, however, was both broken and vitiated. It was broken by the despair to find the human substance for a spiritual order of society; and it was vitiated through the unique structure of Nietzsche's spiritual life...the Platonic attitude of Nietzsche can be resumed if a new hope should awaken: that the human substance is present which would make possible an overcoming of the crisis "in society"...and if the soul of the man who makes the attempt would not be his prison.

E. Voegelin: "Nietzsche, the Crisis and the War" (1945)

M. Horkheimer: ...Why are we gathered here today?

T. Adorno: To this question, I would reply that nothing else could occupy us here than the modest attempt of removing at least some of the caricatures under which Nietzsche is suffocating today in public opinion. On one side, Nietzsche has been confiscated by the National Socialists, who have made of him an advocate of the blond beast, the

advocate of German imperialism; they thought themselves capable of deducing from his *oeuvre* that only power, the will to power, would have worth as a norm for human conduct, and, thus they thought it possible to use him to justify this kind of arbitrariness and violence. On the other side, one finds an attempt to level down Nietzsche, to make of him precisely one of these official thinkers whom he fought all his life...

H. G. Gadamer: ...You all know that Nietzsche has announced the coming of European nihilism. The decisive question that one must pose regarding this prognostication, in the course of the history of the Western world, seems to me: what is the meaning of the announcement and the formulation of such a prognostic? Is it a way of legitimating that which will come, to think it in advance and ground it in reason? Or is it rather – and this latter seems to me to be your opinion Mr. Adorno – a way of preparing oneself to stand up against that which is coming and seems unavoidable?

Horkheimer: I think we will understand this problem better if we reflect on Nietzsche's method. I see in this method a lack, a lack of dialectic. Nietzsche saw that Christianity will not cure the world. So, he became the Antichrist and immediately inscribed antichristianism on his flag. He saw that the bourgeoisie could not resolve all the social questions. So, he turned towards feudalism, toward the aristocracy and inscribed aristocracy on his flag...If he had known the circumstances that caused the bourgeoisie's inability to accomplish all the tasks it had proposed for itself in its philosophy, then, he would have tried to think of the practical and social propositions it had put forward. To the extent that he failed to give this dialectical interpretation, it became easier to misuse him...

Gadamer: ...In fact, I remember that in Germany, around 1930, an interpretation of Nietzsche by Alfred Baeumler appeared at the *Reclam* editions, reducing Nietzsche quite deliberately to the doctrine of will to power; and considered all the rest of his philosophy as pure mysticism. Now, I believe it is time to measure world-wide the impact Nietzsche had as a psychologist, the perspectives he has opened for understanding the spirit by his way of interpreting moral phenomena.

Radio Conversation (July 1950)

Man stands for a self-suppressing that is nothing but a self-surpassing; he is the affirmation of his self-transcendence. Many texts (the greater part of them) authorize us to hear this with the guarantee of a still traditional philosophical knowledge. The commentator who Hegelianizes Nietzsche cannot, in this sense, be refuted.

And yet we know that Nietzsche follows an entirely different path, even if he does so against himself, always aware, to the point of suffering, of a rupture within philosophy so violent that by it philosophy is dislocated. Going beyond, creation, the creative exigency – we may become enchanted by these terms and open ourselves to their promise; but they tell, finally, of nothing but their wearing away inasmuch as they keep us still close to ourselves, under the infinitely prolonged sky of man.

M. Blanchot: The Infinite Conversation (1967)

There is no possible compromise between Hegel and Nietzsche. Nietzsche's philosophy has a great polemical range; it forms an absolute anti-dialectics and sets out to expose all the mystifications that find refuge in the dialectic.

G. Deleuze: Nietzsche and Philosophy (1962)

The Eternal Return is a necessity that must be willed: only he who I am now can will the necessity of my return and all the events that have resulted in what I am – i.e. inasmuch as the will here supposes a subject. Now this subject can no longer will itself as it has been up to now, but must will all its previous possibilities; for, in adopting the necessity of the return as universal law at the outset, I de-actualize my present self to will myself in *all the other selves*, whose entire series must be gone through so that, following the circular movement, I can again become *what I am at the moment in which I discover* the law of the Eternal Return.

P. Klossowski: Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle (1969)

Fairly generally, Nietzsche's work has the effect of an irresistible seduction, but no consequences follow from this seduction. His dazzling books have the effect like alcohol.

They excite and illuminate but leave intact an elementary form of thinking...

The meaning of his thinking has remained, until today, inaccessible. Since the time of his notoriety – had that been more than a scene of misunderstanding? – the sum total of my comments has tried to do something no one else had done before, but what Nietzsche had hoped that someone after him would attempt: to give the ins and outs of a position by which the order of values is overturned. Nietzsche assumes the sovereignty of man in this world of servile sovereignty and sovereign slavery.

G. Bataille: “Nietzsche and Communism” (1943/1976)

It cannot be totally fortuitous that the discourse bearing his name in society, in accordance with civil and editorial norms, has served as a legitimating reference for ideologues, there is nothing absolutely contingent in the fact that the only politics that has *actually* brandished this name as its major and official sign, has been Nazi politics.

By that I am not saying that this “Nietzschean” politics be for ever the only one possible, not even that it correspond to the reading of the [Nietzsche] legacy: not even that those who did not make it their point of reference have read it better. No, the future of the Nietzsche-text is not closed. But if, in the still open contours of the epoch the only politics claiming to be *so called* Nietzschean will have been Nazi: that is necessarily significant, and ought to be interrogated in all its ramifications.

We cannot start from the belief that we know what Nazism is, and from that knowledge we have to re-read Nietzsche, and his great politics. I do not believe that we know

how to think what Nazism is, yet. This task is before us, and the political reading of the Nietzschean *corpus* is part of it. I would say the same thing of the Heideggerian, Marxist, or Freudian *corpus* – and of many others.

In short, has Nietzsche's great politics been a failure, or is it still to come beyond a seism of which national-socialism or fascism would have been only episodes?

J. Derrida: "Nietzsche's Otobiography" (1979)

It was inevitable that the relation of "Overman" to the "much too numerous" came to be interpreted as an attempt at reinstating slavery. Beside saying that these attempts are coming today from an altogether different side, let us say that we have heard all kinds of stupidities imaginable – and still a certain number that are unimaginable – about Nietzsche. That he has suffered the repercussions of a crucial hour of Germany, that he has been falsified, made suspect in every sense, does not change his *oeuvre*. It remains a test for the intellect for centuries to come and something still more. The critique does not situate it, it situates itself on it. The new type is not the great master to come, it is the one who will render to the "much too numerous" their dignity, their meaning.

E. Jünger: "The Wall of Time" (1957)

The five rubrics we have mentioned – "nihilism," "revaluation of all values hitherto," "will to power," "eternal recurrence of the same," and "Overman" – each portrays Nietzsche's metaphysics from just *one* perspective, although in each case it is a perspective that defines the whole. Thus Nietzsche's metaphysics is grasped only when what is named in these five headings can be thought – that is, essentially experienced – in its primordial and heretofore merely intimated conjunction.

M. Heidegger: "European Nihilism" (1937)

In order to draw near the essential will of Nietzsche's thinking, and remain close to it, our thinking must acquire enormous range, plus the ability to see beyond everything that is fatally contemporary in Nietzsche.

M. Heidegger: "The Will to Power as Art" (1937)

The will becomes free from what revolts it when it becomes free as will, that is, free for the going in the passing away – but the kind of going that does not get away from the will, but comes back, bringing back what is gone. The will becomes free from its revulsion against time, against time's mere past, when it steadily wills the going and coming back, of everything.

M. Heidegger: What is Called Thinking (1951)

The overcoming of nihilism by the man who overcomes himself is the preamble to the prophecy of Eternal Return, and the Nietzschean philosophy, in its principle, does not go beyond that. The will of the Overman and of Eternal return are Nietzsche's "last wills" and his "last thoughts". They unify in a systematic manner the whole of his experience.

K. Loewith: Nietzsche: Philosopher of the Eternal Return of the Same (1938)

No thinker in history has been so obsessed with God as was Nietzsche, nor has any other thinker, with the possible exception of his deepest predecessors, Spinoza and Hegel, so fully known and envisioned the totality of God, a totality which is finally inseparable from consciousness itself. But it was Nietzsche who discovered the nihilistic identity of the Christian and biblical God, and, although unheralded as such, this was one of the revolutionary events of the nineteenth century, and one which made Nietzsche, along with Kierkegaard, one of the creators of a truly modern or post-modern theology.

T. Altizer: "Nietzsche and Biblical Nihilism" (1989)

The term "nihilism," including completed, that is, neither passive nor reactive nihilism, conserves in Nietzsche's terminology – just like that of "fable" – certain features that it has in ordinary language; in fact, the world in which truth has become fable is the site of an experience which is not more "authentic" than the one opened up by metaphysics. This experience is not *more* authentic, for, authenticity – the proper, the reappropriation – itself declines with the death of God.

G. Vattimo: The End of Modernity (1985)

Here, Nietzsche on the one hand, and Freud and Lacan on the other, part company: what Nietzsche denounces as the "nihilistic" gesture to counteract life-asserting instincts, Freud and Lacan conceive as the very basic structure of human drive as opposed to natural instincts. In other words, what Nietzsche cannot accept is the radical dimension of the death drive – the fact that the excess of the Will over a mere self-contented satisfaction is always mediated by the "nihilistic" stubborn attachment to Nothingness.

S. Žižek: The Ticklish Subject (1999)

With Nietzsche, the criticism of modernity dispenses for the first time with its retention of an emancipatory content. Subject-centered reason is confronted with reason's absolute other. And as a counterauthority to reason, Nietzsche appeals to experiences that are displaced back into the archaic realm – experiences of self-disclosure

of a decentered subjectivity, liberated from all constraints of cognition and purposive activity, all imperatives of utility and morality.

J. Habermas: “The Entry into Postmodernity: Nietzsche as a Turning Point” (1985)

The defensibility of the Nietzschean position turns *in the end* on the answer to the question: was it right in the first place to reject Aristotle? For, if Aristotle’s position in ethics and politics – or something very like it – could be sustained, the whole Nietzschean enterprise would be pointless. This is because the power of Nietzsche’s position depends upon the truth of one central thesis: that all rational vindications of morality manifestly fail and that *therefore* belief in the tenets of morality needs to be explained in terms of a set of rationalizations which conceal the fundamentally non-rational phenomena of the will. My own argument obliges me to agree with Nietzsche that the philosophers of the Enlightenment never succeeded in providing grounds for doubting this central thesis.

A. MacIntyre: After Virtue (1981)

We need morality only for want of love, I agree and may be Nietzsche would agree too. But, - and this is where I take my leave from Nietzsche – from that, I conclude that we are terribly in need of morals. For, in truth, we are so little capable of love.

A. Comte-Sponville: Why we are not Nietzscheans (1991)

The Idea of eternal return is a mysterious one, and Nietzsche has often perplexed other philosophers with it: to think that everything recurs as we once experienced it, and that the recurrence itself returns ad infinitum! What does this mad myth signify?

Putting it negatively, the myth of eternal return states that a life which disappears once and for all, which does not return, is like - a shadow without weight, dead in advance - and whether it was horrible, beautiful, or sublime, its horror, sublimity, and beauty mean nothing. We need take no more note of it than of a war between two African kingdoms in the fourteenth century, a war that altered nothing in the destiny of the world, even if a hundred thousand blacks perished in excruciating torment.

Will the war between two African kingdoms in the fourteenth century itself be altered if it recurs again and again, in eternal return?

It will: it will become a solid mass, permanently protuberant, its inanity irreparable.

M. Kundera: The Unbearable Lightness of Being (1984)*

C. Salmon: You begin *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* with a reflection on Nietzsche’s eternal return. Is this not a philosophical meditation developed in an abstract fashion, without personages, without situation?

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M. Kundera: Oh no! This reflection introduces, as early as the first line of the novel, the fundamental situation of a personage – Tomas; it exposes his problem: lightness of existence in a world where there is no eternal return.

M. Kundera: An interview (1986)*

The eternal return is thus an answer to the problem of *passage*. And in this sense it must not be interpreted as the return of something that is, that is “one” or the “same”. We misunderstand “eternal return” if we understand it as “return of the same.” It is not being that returns but rather the returning itself that constitutes being insofar as it is affirmed of becoming and of that which passes.

G. Deleuze: Nietzsche and Philosophy (1962)

At this point, we encounter the problem posed by those texts of Nietzsche that have a fascist or anti-Semitic resonance. We should first recognize here that Nietzsche nourished and still nourishes a great many young fascists...

The revolutionary character of Nietzsche’s thought becomes apparent at the level of method: it is his method that makes Nietzsche’s text something not to be characterized as “fascist,” “bourgeois,” or “revolutionary,” but to be regarded as an exterior field where fascist, bourgeois, and revolutionary forces meet head on.

G. Deleuze: “Nomad Thought” (1973)

Nietzsche is the individual who has raised, all by himself, the general level of our thinking about life. He achieved this by a powerful detachment as regards men and things that surrounded him, so well that we are obliged to start from the level he has imposed. His voice covers all other voices of the present; the clarity of his thinking makes all other thinking seem fuzzy. For those who are freed from their chains, and recognize no tyrants in the area of knowledge and life, he alone counts.

G. Colli: After Nietzsche (1975)

Nietzsche does not wind up with empty abstractions when he carries the image of man to the extreme. His problem, rather, is the concrete abundance that he must fit into it. The most extreme form of being human finally becomes unthinkable because the multiplicity of contradictions that must be assimilated cannot be integrated in one person of superior power. The conflict between wisdom and power remains unsolved in the highest man.

W. Mueller-Lauter: Nietzsche: His Philosophy of Contradictions and the Contradictions of his Philosophy (1971)

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It is a typically modern error to believe that ethics might change the world, to guarantee the Apollonian natural right to an endurable life. Nietzsche has classically formulated the regulative character of the ethical Apollonian in that he advances the claim that only as much of the Dionysian foundation of pleasure and pain should be permitted to surface in an individual as “can be again subdued by the Apollonian force of transfiguration.” Is it possible to conceive a more sublime acknowledgement of culture?

P. Sloterdijk: *Thinker on Stage: Nietzsche’s Materialism* (1986)

A culture in which Nietzschean metaphors were liberalized would be one which took for granted that philosophical problems are as temporary as poetic problems, that there are no problems which bind the generations together into a single natural kind called “humanity.”

R. Rorty: “The Contingency of Language” (1986)

Nietzsche realizes that somebody who wants to create himself cannot afford to be too Apollonian. In particular, he cannot imitate Kant’s attempt to survey the entire realm of possibility from above. For the idea of fixed, unchangeable “realm of possibility” is hard to combine with the idea that one might, by one’s own efforts, enlarge that realm – not simply to take one’s place within a predetermined scheme, but change that scheme.

R. Rorty: “Proust, Nietzsche, and Heidegger” (1986)

It remains that I am fiercely attaching myself to the reading of Nietzsche’s texts that I have brought with me. My knowledge of Nietzsche is very poor and, imagine, that this ignorance, like all my scandalous ignorance (which makes, that I have “no culture” – do you recall this word), must certainly have *helped me to write what I have written*, and, quite simply, to write.

L. Althusser: *Letter to F. Navarro* (July 1984)

My knowledge of Nietzsche is much better than the one I have of Heidegger; nevertheless, these are the two fundamental experiences that I have had. It is probable that if I had not read Heidegger I would not have read Nietzsche. I had tried to read Nietzsche in the fifties, but Nietzsche all alone said nothing to me. While Nietzsche and Heidegger, that was a philosophical shock! But I have written nothing on Heidegger and have written on Nietzsche only a smallish article; nevertheless, these are the two authors I have read most. I think it is important to have a small number of authors with whom one thinks, with whom one works, but on whom one does not write.

M. Foucault: “The Return of Morals” (1984)